

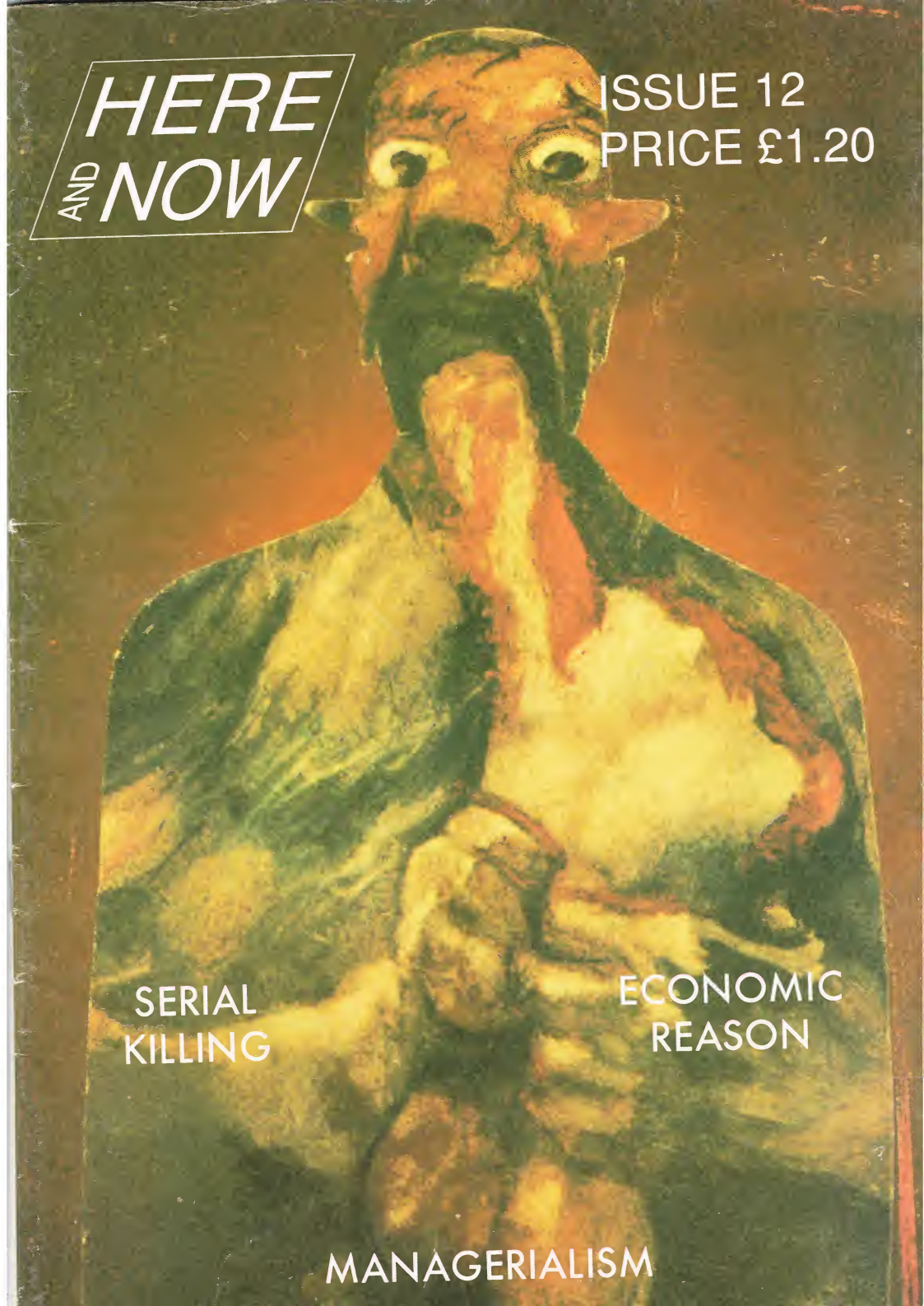
**HERE  
AND NOW**

ISSUE 12  
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SERIAL  
KILLING

ECONOMIC  
REASON

MANAGERIALISM



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Here and Now

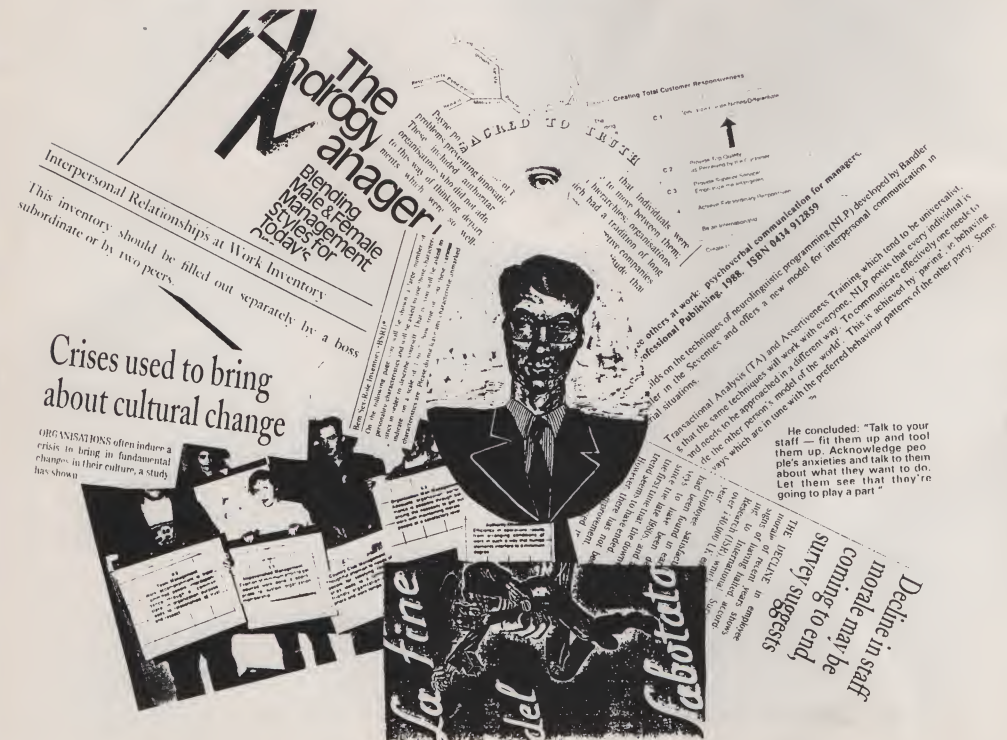
No. 12

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# Editorial

**B**EWAILING THE BREAKDOWN OF SOCIAL ORDER IS A SURE WAY TO gain a hearing for repressive recipes. Predictably both Roger Scruton in the latest *Salisbury Review*, and Beatrix Campbell in the latest (and mercifully the last) issue of *Marxism Today*, have worked up a lather of indignation about the demoralisation of society by, respectively, "hearts softened by pleasure and indulgence" and a "disaffected, dangerous masculinity" undermining the "discipline of communal culture". These complementary diagnoses of the most recent forms of social 'disorder' in British cities display both their authors' obsessions and the strategic interests of the strata they are speaking for. For Scruton only a religious revival (coupled with harsh policing and sentencing) can keep the mob at heel, for Campbell (a 'communist' who loathes at least 50% of the proletariat) only a more intensive management of everyday life can unbend the springs of this aggression. Both confirm the reigning orthodoxy: without constant inspection and instruction (however disguised) by the properly qualified authorities (the police and social workers) the riff raff will go wild in an orgy of rape and pillage.

This issue is devoted to probing the proliferating agencies of control; agencies which have apparently flourished under a period when 'rolling back the frontiers of the State' constituted the apotheosis of government rhetoric and ideology.

In the opening article Frank Dexter attempts to provide an overview of developments in the management of production, and this is followed by a discussion between John Quail and Mike Peters as to the merits of the new strategy of managerialisation (whereby workers are encouraged to manage themselves - akin to the poison of guilt and self-punishment or an opportunity to displace the administrative class?). The spread of managerialism from its origins as a mechanism for the control of wage labour, into the territory of everyday life, the emotions and the unconscious itself is documented in articles charting its progress in the professions, by Colin Webster, into grief, by D.K., and into the culture industry in the exploitation of 'horror' by Frank Dexter.

Despite managerialism's self-professed claim to reconstruct community, be it in the workplace, nation, or beyond, it is itself dependent upon (and instrumental in creating) a widespread **desocialisation** - a process nurtured by the spread of distrust, the destruction of existing solidarities, and the perpetual defamation of convivial ways of living as 'traditional', 'outdated' or 'conservative' as Steve Bushell reveals. Indeed it is the real horror of the experiences of human beings in Kurdistan and Yugoslavia which shows that the modern tradition of nationalism cannot sustain the test of establishing a better society or community, although as the letter from a Saudi P.O.W. camp indicates there are less illusions about this in Middle Eastern Kurdistan than in European Yugoslavia.

Far from conforming to a model of central control, or a myth of total administration, the 'fragmentarian' rather than totalitarian strategy prevails. The fate of the Soviet Bloc as described by John Barrett confirms that fragmentation is where the real convergence of East and West is heading. Previously particularities had been able to survive precisely because the ruling power's claim to universality necessitated ignoring these peculiarities. No more so. By relinquishing claim to the universal the particular is all the better policed. The abandonment by the radical professional (amongst others) of claims to Truth has buttressed their role as arbitrators (potentially as powerful a role as any in this state), although this has not prevented such claims being made by some in the pursuit of special causes as Alex Richards discloses.

However this new role sends fissures into the depths of professionalism. Colin Webster uncovers the tensions which have produced the atmosphere of constant crisis under which most professionals labour - a point John Quail also makes to explain the plethora of different managerial strategies.

The current role of the manager whose job began with the destruction of 'archaic' work practices the better to unleash a devastating industrialisation, and continues with the most intimate penetration of the corners of daily life, calls into question the practice of those radicals who still find mileage in 'demystification' as an oppositional strategy, although Kevin Hetherington reveals that such a process is far from complete.

*The present stage of capitalism is one in which it is possible to say that the central imperative of capital is nothing less than the **transformation of people**. This makes 'management' as such into the aim and not just a means to an end, at the same time as it makes all 'labour' increasingly into a process of 'management' - of the body, of appearance, of desire, of self as much as of the behaviours of others.*

*This undercuts the possibility of any meaning to a struggle within the terms of capital: "Human Resources of All Lands Unite - You have nothing to lose but the capital invested in your training ?" It also underlines the importance of recognising capital's need for 'making both ends meet' politically. For this constitution of a new social order **needs the Left** for its constant deconstructive demonstration of the horrors of leaving people unregulated (or 'excluded' as it would say), as much as the Left needs the Right in order to delude itself that its 'radicality' has some other ends than those of capital.*

*Socialism wasn't 'stolen' by capital, nor can the radical intelligentsia be accused of joyriding a 'marxism' whose brake linings they have grossly abused. The history of socialism teaches us differently, which is why 'history' is now a source of unease for intellectuals whose chief aim in maintaining their control of the schooling system is to ensure that not a whisper of the real past shall be divulged to the next generation, a past that does not fit the neat little dichotomies of progressivism/reaction which these pundits trade in.*

*Those who have accepted their role as the managers of everyday life have only one hope of redeeming themselves, and that is to **fail**. A residue of conscience would dictate some deliberateness to this outcome, the sooner the better. To those who cannot grasp this what can be said ? Beware your goals lest you attain them.*

M.P. & S.B.

## REPORTS

### Readers Meeting September 1991 (Leeds)

**W**HAT WAS INTENDED TO BE AN OPPORTUNITY to explore the role of 'progressive' 'liberatory' management in present times came somewhat unstuck when Sadie Plant, author of 'The Most Radical Gesture - The S.I. in a Post-Modern Age', took this as an opportunity to launch an auto-critique of her book. Somewhat knocked off balance by this Alex Richards, whose intention had been to locate the S.I. as the last of the vanguards and not necessarily the most interesting, instead elaborated on his view that the metropolis held an overly favoured position in the concerns of revolutionaries, to the detriment of suburbia and the countryside.

With the chair floundering around trying to find a theme to link these disparate concerns, others soon chipped in with their own particular and peculiar obsessions. From a discussion about the importance of space over time to the disturbing assertion that the struggle against alienation conceals a death-wish, a lot of interesting insights succeeded in being said without notice being taken of any of them.

We will be trying this again sometime, and planning it better, I hope. Those wishing to volunteer their services as speakers, please forward your address to Here and Now.

### The Chair

### Here and Now Meeting in Poly Occupation

**W**E WERE INVITED BY MIDDLESEX POLY students to give a talk in their occupation in December. Partly they wanted information on the role of the Situationists in Paris '68, partly they wanted a criticism of vanguards. We called the talk 'the Situationists and Beyond'.

Starting from the pamphlet 'Of Student Poverty', the social moment in today's Polys was described as a commodification of education, a further Tayloring of learning to the needs of the economy leading to unrest.

Hilarity ensued when the summing up of the Strasbourg judge was read out from the preface of 'Of Student Poverty' - his condemnation of the Strasbourg students was expressed in much the same way as the vanguards had been slagging off students in the occupation who wouldn't follow their line.

A critique of the left was made which highlighted its role (in its everyday tactics) of shoring up the State, by presenting it with demands that required State action. Legislative, judicial or procedural action is privileged by the left over other forms of solving problems, thereby exposing its function as a handy mechanic for the State machine. We suggested that the century-long crisis of the left lay precisely in this sort of statism which at best ignored, at worst destroyed, the many actions, experiments and tendencies which defended and advanced vernacular ways of living in the here and now.

Unfortunately automatism in the form of the Socialist Workers Party seeped into the meeting, and managed to infect ourselves as well. There's something depressing about finding yourself reciting familiar (and long-won) arguments about Kronstadt with Leninists. The real danger of zombies is that they turn everyone else into one.

However afterwards we were able to see for ourselves how the occupation had been organised with food available, for a self-determined donation, a library open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (considerably more than the Poly authorities had managed during the period of normality) and non-commodity Pool. We attended a meeting where tactics were discussed for maintaining the occupation. Some spoke of opening the Poly up to squatters and the homeless over Xmas, but we've since heard that the wave of occupations of the Polys in London is over... for now. One criticism to be made of some of the student's propaganda is the 'Students... we are the future' type-stuff which seems to be appealing to Capital to take good care of its future managers. Always a temptation in any struggle to ally oneself with the perpetual rationalising tendency of Capital, such a tactic replaces the awkward, different, combative and convivial aspects of the struggle with a media-driven rationalisation that at its most effective can only provide Capital with the necessary negativity for reforming itself.



# FULL EMPLOYMENT & TOTAL MANAGEMENT

*Frank Dexter dissects the implications of the contemporary organisation of work.*

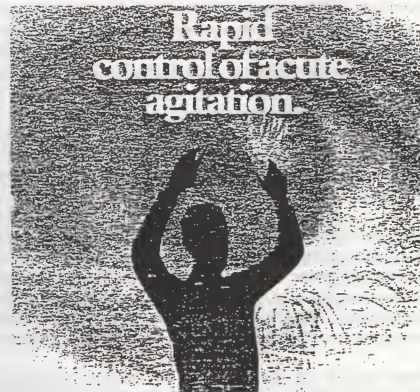
'SELF-EMPLOYED' IS ONE OF THOSE STUPID expressions which gloss the oxymoronic with the patina of 'common sense'. How does one use oneself? It is like the quaint notion of 'self-abuse', which could only be imagined by the sort of deformed minds who propagated this term, hoping to achieve this effect, or their current descendants who aspire to convince their victims they are suffering from equally absurd defects in their selfhoods. To be employed is a necessary condition for survival under an economic system which attempts to create a society on the basis of universal desocialization (and tries to attach 'selves' to its various functions). It is a regrettable misfortune, nonetheless, which everyone at least semi-consciously recognises. To be 'self-employed' is a ridiculous bureaucratic misnomer: a social security category which is currently held out as a personalised utopia for those suffering from 'overemployment'. Absurd as the term 'self-employment' is, if taken literally, by virtue of this role as chimera (translating the desire for emancipation into the language of self-oppression) it is important to examine it.

'Unemployed' is an equally ridiculous term. Each age has its dominant mental disorder. Ours is the Metonymic Mentality - whereby things are called by the names of some contingent attribute or of something arbitrarily contiguous to them. 'Unskilled worker' for example, for (probably quite skillful) people who happen to be in more than averagely stupid jobs). Likewise, being 'unemployed' which denotes a circumstance (as officially designated) is used as if it named a special class of people. What about the not-yet-unemployed?, or for that matter the 'misemployed' (a universal class if ever there was one)... or, a case in point, the 'overemployed'? A suitable term for those aware of being **used up** more quickly than most. This self-defining class grew quite large some time ago, and a lot of the recent progressivist strategies of employers are a response to the consequences of this rise in consciousness.

Once one begins to think in terms of 'being employed' as being **consumed**, a lot of things can be seen the right way round. Not only do the 'employers' become recognised as the real consumers of the worker, but their 'profits' as the wages their workers pay them in order to keep them in work. Why not? Socialists already talk about wages as the price for keeping people out of unemployment. And socialists are those on whom capitalism may be dependent for its long-term salvation.

What was called the revolt against work has called forth a counter-revolution which was actually being prepared long before it; it amounts to nothing less than the abolition of the working class. One aspect of this strategy is the deconstruction of the concept of the 'job'.

Capitalism, whatever its ideology proclaims, still needs work. But **jobs** are a very inconvenient and inflexible way of getting people to work: unemployment being a thing capital **does** to people, rather than a climatic condition, there ought to be a transitive verb 'to unemploy'.



Paradoxical as it might seem, unemploying people is a good way of getting us all to work harder. It's a strategy that 'works', so to speak. And the 'unemployed' include some of capital's best workers.

There are other aspects of the strategy that deserve note, hidden behind the morbid spectacle of underclasses and superexploited and marginalised and others hired to perform abjectness **pour encourager les autres**. Two things in particular need more attention: one is this rise of 'self-employment', whereby a certain fraction of yesterday's proletariat are re-enlisted under the colours of the petty bourgeoisie, and the other is **managerialisation**: a process in which the remainder are transformed by sociological alchemy into professionals and managers. These are complementary processes. Both have a long prehistory (in the rhetoric of 'property-owning democracy' and 'paternalism' respectively), but each has a new inflexion and a novel **recuperative** twist: basically the first is the favoured strategy of the capitalist Right, and the latter is the strategy of the Left Capitalists.

In its ideal utopian form, self-employment as a generalised policy inverts the old line of ideological legitimization of capital. In the epoch of industrial society, the line was 'everyone is a worker' (sc. even the boss); today the line would be 'everyone is a capitalist': self-employment is the attempt to realise this vision.

For many of those newly 'self-employed' during the last decade, this status has been largely a way of being employed directly by **capital-in-general** (which thus far can only take the form of **money as such**, administered by banks), rather than having this employment mediated by managerial and bureaucratic servitude to **particular** capitals.

It does make very important differences - just as performing 'outwork' for the **merchant capitalist** was a different status from working in a factory for **industrial capital**, after the 'revolution' in the forms of technology and social control at the beginning of the 19th century.

There is, as Marx was at pains to insist, nothing eternal about social forms, and the **wage-labour relation** is no exception. Marxists have, not untypically, been overtaken by capital's practical dialectic being superior yet again to the theoretical conservatism of 'political economy'.

In the seventies some sociologists indulged the hypothesis of a **proletarianization** of managers, speculating on their fate as components of a 'new working class'. Capital in the eighties has taken exactly the opposite course in **managerializing** large sectors of the working class: making many of them carry the responsibility of administering capital's own functions - even calculating their own rate of exploitation - under the grand title of **self-management** appropriated from the new radicalism itself.

Much of the 'self-employment' into which previously employed (or, as one should say, **directly managed**) workers have escaped or been redeployed, of course involves an 'autonomy' just as spurious as that enjoyed by those who remain legally under the tutelage of corporations while now having the inverse regime of 'self-management' inflicted upon them.

It is, in both cases, the very meaning of 'autonomy' that has been restructured and drastically reduced, as much as the conditions of life that have been rearranged.

In the case of the new self-employed, it is money-capital administered by the bank manager which takes on the function of discipline and surveillance, while the workers have to become themselves capitalist functionaries: 'being one's own boss' meaning doing one's own accounts, doing one's own bureaucracy etc. and in general working much harder than when one was a mere wage-slave.

In the case of the new corporate worker with delegated semi-autonomy, one has to incorporate the function of discipline and surveillance into one's own self-identity (especially when one's title

becomes literally 'managerial' - and it is not inconceivable for all such employees to become **managers** in this sense).

They too have to work twice as hard and at different things, but in a different way from the former category. They have to internalise their corporation and not just love big brother, but **become** him.

While self-employment means confronting capital directly in the form of the market (the customers who pay your wages infinitely less reliably than the boss ever did) and the bank loan (which becomes a quasi-feudal rent with the sword of Damocles suspended by a credit-line), self-management means taking all the mediations and contradictions of the 'organisation' into one's very soul. Or at least that is what the corporation must now attempt to do.

The old days when all the company wanted from you was your 'work' and was content to leave your unconscious to your dreams and the TV have gone. The 'working day' whose notional quantitative components Marx was interested in, in order to discover where the 'difference' of the surplus came from, must now be examined from its **qualitative side**: the labour-process is not just what the worker does for capital, but what capital does to the worker.

And capital has finally come to realise the full importance of exploring the infinite scope of what uses can be made of the social and psychic territory over which it has command for those hours. 'Training' workshops, seminars, brainwashing and morale-boosting exercises can be as important as any other kind of 'labour' expected of the worker in the age of the Totally Managed Life.

Robert Owen already saw the potential of the factory as a school and a seminary for moulding the moral and sexual materials embodied in proletarian bodies. And Fourier explored, as kind of surrealist bureaucrat, the outer-limits of what could be conceived in the way of harmonizing human desires with social functions. Today all corporations are moral industries and all managers aspire to be Fourierists.

## FASHION PAGE

AN UNPUBLISHED TEXT(\*)

### Translator's Introduction

*To recover what is insignificant is always more significant than what is significant. In translating what is not-written, the translator allows us to recognize ourselves as the empty yet ever-changing place within which what does not exist may yet fill the space of writing. What is translated overflows in its replenished void, and yet circles around forever in its vertigo of insignificance.*

*In his book **Qu'est-ce que c'est le point?** Professor Rene Gade proposes the End of Writing as the most formidable transgression of postmodernity. How are we to write After Writing? This is the challenge posed to the intellectual at the site of superfluity, where the (literal) pointlessness of the text intersects with the (virtual) interminableness of sentences which deconstruct themselves after their author has been dethroned. Such is the question addressed by Charlatan in his newest outrage.*

*"How is it possible to ask any longer for the conditions of possibility of a question? To ask a question is to set in motion a possibility of a discourse of truth - and thus of a stage upon which 'meaning' may parade its authority in face of the multiplicity of disposals. If there is no truth then to pose as interrogator is to enter the seat of pretended power of judgement of anticipated answers, to allocate to each one its measure of relevance.*

*To go beyond relevance (relevance) is to seek relief (relief), to ask a question is to execute a sentence, to circumscribe the possibilities of all responses. In future, answers must be freed from their questions and the chains anchoring my sentences together are to be dissolved, without resolution."*

### Author's Postscript

*These words were rediscovered (retrouvé) from a waste-paper basket. In consigning them to the region of disposability, they are displaced and decentred beyond their own principles of coherence. They assign the mark of pure disfigurement by which the simulacrum is distinguished from the 'original'. But what privileges the original from the residue? by what right does the blank piece of paper claim priority over the crumpled text salvaged by the impatient writer? All paper is merely potential waste-paper. Just as words evaporate into the silence of the inaudible, so too does the solidified page leave no trace of itself in its self-erasure. (the manuscript breaks off at this point)*

<sup>1</sup> (Translator's note: Charlatan distinguishes disposal or disposition (dispositif) from supposition (suppositoire); the former is the extenuation of that which is not necessary; the latter is the insertion of something-into-the-behind

(\*) from "The Difference which makes no difference" in **Les Textes Inédites** by Jacques-Louis Charlatan (Prospero, 1987 450F)



# Managerialism - Life and crisis in the sea of dreams.

John Quail and Mike Peters debate the meaning of the new management.



**'S**CIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT' AS DEVELOPED BY F. W. Taylor was an ideology that required and justified the organisation of work around the maximisation of labour effort. Taylor was a crank. What amounted to - despite his followers' protestations - the maximum possible exploitation and control of labour, offered only to the employer under the full Taylor system a zero sum. The extra surplus that the employer extracted had to be ploughed back into the maintenance of the system that extracted it. Labour got sod all. The only apparent beneficiaries were the administrators of the system.

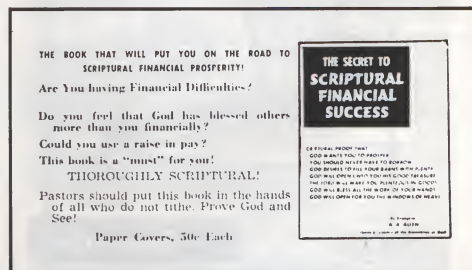
This crankishness was obscured by a subsequent massive increase in productivity stemming from the kind of efficient planning of machine production pioneered by Henry Ford. This is now seen as the epitome of scientific management. Under this system, too, large bureaucracies have been erected but they could graze on the lush surpluses created and still raise wages and lower prices to the consumer. Ford himself was an utter bastard who only paid the higher wages because he had to. Interestingly enough he bulldozed off his son had had built at the Detroit works on one occasion and torched the entire stock of requisition forms on another. He hated bureaucracy.

It was however inescapable that large complex organisations had to be run by bureaucracies. Ford could play the rugged pioneer all he liked but his company had to bureaucratised if it was to move beyond the mass production of one unchanging model. And bureaucratised it did.

The economics of bureaucracy were straightforward then and are straightforward now: it has to be paid for. And either it is paid for by the surpluses its special organisational skills generate or it is paid for by chiselling the pay and conditions of the workforce or - as in the Eastern bloc - the pay and conditions of a whole society. In either case the system is vulnerable to other firms - or other societies - which can produce more surplus with less bureaucracy.

We live in interesting times. The bureaucracies of the East have clearly entered a period of deep and public crisis. But the bureaucracies of the West (or at least the UK and USA) have also entered a period of crisis if less severe and less publicised. The cranky ghost of F. W. Taylor has come back to haunt the system. The addition of managerial hierarchies to organisations is coming out as a zero - and in some cases a negative sum. It had come to be assumed that because certain managerial structures could with spectacular success at certain times in certain areas of production raise the return on capital, raise wages and lower costs to customers in one great big bumper bundle that it followed that managerial structures were ipso facto in consequence a GOOD THING and the guarantor of the optimal allocation of resources in all circumstances. This is becoming open to increasing doubt.

It is at its most dubious in sectors of public services in the UK which have been assailed by pernicious managerialism. The Health Services and the Polys shine out particularly. Cash limited by Government diktat and continually pressed to do more with less the internal struggle over the allocation of resources is acute. On the one hand we have a new, well-paid, well-staffed, well-accommodated high status and largely incompetent management. On the other the specialist professional work-forces have seen their status, pay and conditions deteriorate and their workload steadily rise. Leaving aside external factors (important though they are) it is hard not to see the increasing misery of the workforce as the consequence of the increasing well-being of the management. Management's major claim to legitimacy - the rational distribution of resources for the greatest good of the greatest number - disappears as they feather their nests while all around the squalor deepens.



In the wider scheme of things these may be special cases. It may be that the managerial misery and incompetence is the consequence of the conflict between professional and managerial ideologies with the managers in a state of 'new to it' confusion. In order to assert its will management has to resort to Stalinist authoritarianism. When the managers have learned their job a bit, the government stumps up a bit more cash and managerial ideals have been internalised (and the medical personnel will know what that means) then the whole thing will become a seamless unified culture. Won't it?

Well maybe. The public sector in the UK is just the most obvious bit of managerial dysfunction hanging over from the Thatcher era. In British industry generally over the 1980's management structures have become increasingly Fordist (authoritarian, undemocratic, non-consulting, strictly hierarchical). Workforces are seen as plug in plug out units, a periphery to the essential core of the management structure itself. In its essentials it is a movement to remove any countervailing force to the managerial hierarchy within the enterprise.

But it is no response, the theorists say, to simply unbundle conglomerate organisations and return to the market structures of the Nineteenth Century. Organisations have to have the flexibility of small organisations with the marketing and R and D clout of a large one to survive. So corporations have to be transformed so that the bits of it that deal with customers can adjust their goods and services to deliver what the customer wants at an appropriate price and quality. And in order to do that you have to have individuals with qualities of commitment to quality and performance, creativity and initiative at the base that are the very opposite of the have-a-nice-day zombie or the time serving jobsworth who is the typical lower denizen of a large bureaucracy.

## Debate

Richard Minns

**M**ACH HAS been said to be the most significant event in the small-skill shortage since the war. It is the first time the issue for training and for the industrial sector has been raised. It is the first time the issue for training and for the industrial sector has been raised. It is the first time the issue for training and for the industrial sector has been raised.

[illegible]

reduce the net rate by 10 to 20 percent. The potential of a new currency value linked to increased investment is enormous. In 1988, French lab industry spent \$1.7 billion on machine tools. If Germany's new currency means they are now used for 18.2 hours every day, and another 1.5 hours because we lack a more stable exchange rate, then more than 5000 will be in a year. This year is wanted on the Chinese Coast. Total capital expenditures on plant and machinery by engineering, manufacturing and machine tooling industries was about \$2.5 billion. It is not likely to be affected by devaluations, but it means that more than 11 billion could be invested in a single year.

It is indicative of the different cultures involved that the word "crashing" would not be used to describe the way the market is likely to move. The word is too hard to use the term to describe a specific component, whereas the Germans would use this

only part of a broader process of restructuring education, a different cultural understanding of engineering that involves a sophisticated approach to professional learning and development.

One thing is certain we must not carry on as we are. Without a proper strategy to address the culture problem, more investment will only add to the already huge cost of capital as expenditure goes up, skills disappear or stagnate and the relevant training and research fail to appear. The "growth dividend" will be illusory as it could take time to "grow" new capacity, and the "growth pie" shrivelled by ineffective, unproductive, and costly maintenance and utilisation of capital.

Without revitalising the British industrial culture, more investment is no answer.

*Richard Wilson is Joint Chief Executive of the London Economic Development Corporation, a national business and development agency for London.*

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But as any good manager will tell you it is important to be **pro-active** rather than passive in the face of difficulties. (Bold words and phrases should be treated as vocabulary building.) But before you can act on your **Mission Statement** as amplified by your **Corporate Strategy** and **Action Plan** you have to do a **Status Review** involving a **SWOT Analysis** (that's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). And if managers can be pro-active I don't see why the pro-situ proletariat or indeed the contingently radical revolutionary can't be pro-active too. There is enough in the new management thinkers which can be put to good account by the people in the lower echelons who neither mind at all being an empowered worker (or even worker's power - remember that? Those were the days.) The notion of a large degree of autonomy, the right to move as circumstances dictate and as your creativity dictates as well, all that sounds like a pleasant way to work. It allows active units with professional or craft ideologies to not only question management orders but to **question managements' right to exist**. In other words the new management thinking seems eminently adaptable to a form of space seizing syndicalism.

**Remember:** there is no instrument of another's will which, if appropriated by us, cannot be used against them.

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(They are zombies or jobsworths for very good reasons. As anyone knows who has worked in large organisations, except within narrow limits which are themselves full of nasty traps, the last thing anyone wants from an underling is high qualities of commitment to creativity and initiative etc etc. For a start it makes their superiors look like complete prats. And as the Japanese proverb has it 'the nail that stands higher is hammered down'.)

So there is a paradox at the heart of this new management stuff. Conformity machines are going to have to breed artists. Hierarchies that reward people for moving as far away from the customer as possible are going to have to reward people for staying near them. And, say the experts, the people that run bureaucracies ten layers deep, that sweated and plotted and knifed their way up the hierarchy are going to have to cut it away. Drucker suggests that in future no more than three layers of bureaucracy will be necessary. Three! (Think about that in terms of your workplace comrade.) But you can see the dream they are peddling: a flat hierarchy with all the corporate effort in the field units up-front, getting sensual with the customer.



# Perchance to wake up ?

## Critical Response to John Quail by Mike Peters



I THINK JOHN'S STYLE HAS BEEN INFECTED BY reading too many of those pop-up management books. I'm not saying he's swallowed their slogans whole as if they were real ideas, but he does seem to have been bitten by the sound-bites, and the bugs can be fatal.

Starting at the end, what on earth can it mean to say that management speak "can be put to good account by the people in the lower echelons"? The notion that this specific lexicon is a merely neutral 'instrument' that can be used for contrary purposes by those against whose interests it is directed is an old idea and it is a lethally disabling one. The whole point of the current evangelism is to get people to use these words. They have no other 'function' than to enforce a certain regime of communication/control.

This language is an integral component in the practices by which they are deployed: the phrases aren't just lying around in the books, they are 'inscribed' in exercises, training workshops, monitoring procedures, and all the rest of it. Above all, they are an 'accounting' procedure, independently of whatever 'semantic content' they may be thought to have. And, as every cynical manager knows, they 'mean' bugger all. The words themselves change constantly anyway; the power being exercised through them comes not from what they (may be made to) mean but from the way they are implemented. To imagine otherwise would be like imagining that measuring costs and benefits in monetary terms is just a neutral 'technicality'.

To try to use the strategy of classical 'ideology-critique' - exposing the contradictions between the proclaimed ideals and the prevailing practices (which is more or less what he's suggesting) is to miss the point. This kind of critique never worked except as a means by which marxism claimed to be able to realise a better form of capitalism than the bourgeoisie. Those who lived off this kind of historicism have deservedly died by it. Their beloved 'History' didn't need them.

But to hope to fulfil the ideals of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' is a bit different, to say the least, from looking for radical potential in buzzwords like Total Quality, Corporate Identity, Self-Funding and Performance Appraisal.

How does John arrive at this barrel-scraping pseudo-optimism? My guess is that he isn't ready to acknowledge that the current

management linguistic offensive is genuinely radical. It is already a recuperation (to coin a phrase) of the rhetoric of yesteryear's radicality: self-management, anti-bureaucracy, etc.

I don't think you can 'reappropriate' stolen weapons which have been deliberately sabotaged ('customised') precisely to blow up in your face. I'm not talking a priori theory here; I'm talking from what it is like to be told that I have to spend more and more of my 'working time' submitting my 'work' to a kind of reflexive cost-benefit analysis from the standpoint of my bosses. SWOT analysis is all about redefining what you do in terms designed to ensure you are doing something completely different from what you ought to be doing. If John has some nifty ideas for how this 'stuff' as he calls it can be 'used against them' please let us all know. And while he's at it he could tell black people that racist language is similarly just an instrument that when used by real radicals can be turned against racism. This isn't cheap rhetoric; I really am saying that the new managerial discourse is itself all about translating the radical impulse towards autonomy into a 'manageable' form of social control.

The rot sets in in John's essay at the point where he describes Taylorism, Fordism and bureaucracy in capitalist language. He deploys capital's own critique of what from capital's point of view is 'wasteful'. The invocation of 'competition' and the crap about being "unresponsive to a world which requires fast and flexible adjustments to take new opportunities and meet new competition which is global and growing ever more intense" is either loaded with a heavy irony which I missed entirely or else is written on automatic pilot. Trance-like sentences like this are generated by anyone dumb enough to go tharn in the face of Japanese juggernauts and other bogeys like "our foreign competitors". These incantations are a big part of the ideological softening up which has been going on for ten years now to panic everyone into submitting to new historical imperatives, the substance of which is never allowed to be debated: what 'work' should be being done for whom and how should its 'value' be measured? These questions cannot be asked as long as competitiveness, efficiency and so on (and their mealy-mouthed siblings 'creativity', 'flexibility' and 'quality') are allowed to be shibboleths. Surely John isn't accepting capital's right to define value after a lifetime of struggling against management's right to manage. Surely he doesn't believe all this. It is just a provocation, isn't it?

## Unapologetic response to Mike Peters



MIKE WRITES THAT MY STYLE HAS BEEN infected by reading 'too many of those pop-up management books'. My style (literary or political) has not been infected by reading but by participant observation of the uses to which off-the-peg ideological consumables are put in large bureaucracies. These bureaucracies are uneasy places. Their preferred mode is an 'everybody wins' acceptance of the status quo: those that are restless and dissatisfied can climb the greasy pole while everyone else finds comfortable niches. But this doesn't happen very often or for all that long. The community of interest between organisation and

individual constantly threatens to dissolve into the war of each against all with everyone but the highest or the lowest operating as rivals, victimised order-takers and victimising order-givers. Mike would appear to be middle of such a squalid mess by the sound of it and he has my profound sympathy. I fail to see, however, why the people responsible for this dysfunctional crapola can't be beaten over the head with it as failure by them in their own terms. (See for example Patrick Heron on Arts Schools in the Guardian, 7.11.91). I don't care whether this is a strategy of classical ideology-criticism or not.

I fear Mike sees management ideas too monolithically. The threatened dissolution into strife and dysfunction is closer to the surface of the management psyche even in the best functioning bureaucracies than Mike would appear to allow. The 'management project' as represented in the writings of the management gurus is to a great degree the business of finding ways to motivate the work-force in order to stop this dissolution. These should not be read as texts of dominance but as texts of unease and vulnerability.

I refuse therefore to treat managerialist rhetoric as the kind of incantations of absolute evil that Mike seems to think I should. I will not cross two candle-sticks or wear a string of garlic round my neck. If a managerial guru says that failure to motivate staff or (worse still) conflict between workforce and management is a sign of bad management our stance should be that that makes our discontent management's fault. They should make us happy. If management gurus say that only three layers of bureaucracy are necessary, I say that any economy drive by management can be thrown back in their faces as a case for their own decimation. If the rhetoric of customer satisfaction can mobilise the rage of students or patients then use it. The New Jerusalem it isn't. But it is a piece of tactical ideological ju-jitsu that will have to do until the real thing comes along. I think this 'barrel-scraping pseudo-optimism' does allow for some creative forms of resistance. I view them as having the potential, say, of the Lucas Aerospace initiatives which didn't bring about a single alternative product but did stave off redundancies for some considerable time effectively by seizing the rhetorical advantage over management. Mike's response appears, on the other hand, to offer only the options of submission, self-immolatory individual defiance or impotent textual deconstruction.



Such responses surely only apply at totalitarian extremes which we have not yet reached. Power must still legitimise itself through rhetoric and while it does both managerial power and managerial rhetoric remain a contested terrain if we wish to make it so. If as Mike suggests, the words mean bugger all and the power is all there is then why continue to produce the reams of management maoism that pour from the presses? Catch 22 doesn't require so many bloody thousands of words. It isn't auto-pilot (or auto-suggestion) but managements real view of the world that they are assailed by increasingly difficult markets on one side and deeply unenthusiastic staffs on the other. All those management books are designed to try and deal with their world and its problems.

And, I am saying, in so doing they may (repeat may) be opening a Pandora's Box because in order to translate 'the radical impulse towards autonomy into a manageable form of social control' the Fordist bureaucracy has to encourage the radical impulse towards autonomy first! The managers themselves find this a risky and threatening strategy even if Mike doesn't. It is a measure of the hole they feel they're in that they will consider it. And I find it more interesting than I might otherwise do because frankly I haven't seen much of the radical impulse towards autonomy around recently.

I remain unrepentant on the use of dominant ideologies against themselves - historically, radical ideologies can without difficulty be shown to be mutated versions of dominant ones. (And vice versa.) Even Mike's reductio ad absurdum of trying to use the language of racism against itself is not as absurd as all that, incidentally.

Certain black radicals (whether or not they are **real** radicals I leave to Mike but they are certainly contigently radical as the object of oppression of the racist rhetoric) have ju-jitsued the categories of white racism though at the probable cost of proto-black supremicisim. They allege an aberrant psycho-genetic mutation which produced whites as a sport apart from the true running, black stock of mankind. It turns the idea of evolution as progress with whites at the peak on its head and its purpose is clear: to clear some psychic space for a (black) impulse towards autonomy. Everything is usable, seen rightly.

**John Quail**

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# Kurdistan as a Permanent Refugee Camp

Since the end of the Gulf War a veil of silence seems to have been drawn over the whole affair. Few indeed are those prepared to question the facts behind the massacre on the road to Basra, or the crushing of popular revolts against Saddam Hussein. The following article and letter from people caught up in the aftermath of war reveal that nothing has got better, and a lot has got worse for the ordinary people of the region.

**I**N KURDISTAN SINCE THE WAR AND THE UPRISING there's an informal, behind the scenes scenario taking place. Basically the coalition, particularly the USA is manipulating and exploiting the situation by, more or less, persuading the rich, especially the landowners, via their influence with the PUK (Kurdistan Patriotic Front) to negotiate with Saddam. It seems the USA is scared of an even bigger explosion from below not only in Kurdistan but throughout Iraq, Iran and Jordan. Thus President Rafsanjani of Iran is refusing to help the somewhat Shia influenced insurgents in the marshlands of southern Iraq because of the increasing tempo of riots and strikes inside Iran.

In a sense, the go between, facilitating liaison between these regimes and the West is King Hussein of Jordan who is a master of two faced diplomacy. He was cast in this role even before the Gulf war. When rioting broke out in Jordan in '89/'90 over high food prices, Saddam helped Hussein by increasing trade in food and oil which allowed the Jordanian state to ameliorate basic living conditions and make some slight democratic changes to keep a cap on things internally. It was favour to be amply returned!

All the regimes in this area of world capital agree on one thing: the maintenance of the status quo. And for Iraqi Kurdistan that means threatening the Kurdish refugees with Winter all over again.

As a result of the Gulf war the poverty in Iraqi Kurdistan has become terrible. In reality the majority of the Kurdish people here have become a vast army of refugees. The safe haven was not a safe haven. Some 70,000 became refugees in Turkey where they now live in virtually unbearable camps. Some could stand it no longer and returned to Iraq to face disease, no money or work, massive food shortages and things like no education for their kids. Constantly moving on from town to town, they are continually attacked by the Iraqi army and on going back to their old homes they only have time to look around and then leave immediately. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide.

Amidst all this, the black market, racketeering and theiving is flourishing and some unscrupulous pigs have made rich pickings. In many cases people running these vicious businesses are protected by PUK commanders in the field. In the south Shia religious big shots ostensibly against Baghdad are up to similar tricks too. In the chaos, people are using the power vacuum to settle all kinds of accounts - like trivial personal grudges - leading to people being regularly blown away. It really is awful.

Other refugees fled to Iran and are now living in tent cities. It's merely reinforced what's in any case been happening for the last 10 years. For example my family has virtually been living in a tent there for the last decade eking out a precarious existence. But now with prices having sometimes been upped by 200% recently, they're at the edge of survival.

Some Kurdish refugees have even left Iran to go to Pakistan. Why there? Well going anywhere, even the most unlikely of places, seemed better than staying on in such miserable conditions. But it was from the frying pan into the fire as the Pakistan authorities immediately tried to deport them back to Baghdad! Moreover this form of death sentence was supported by the United Nations! Consequently the refugees immediately staged a demonstration and protested against the Pakistan authorities who promptly arrested 200 of them. This happened recently and they're still in prison.

In Saudi Arabia too there are many many Kurdish prisoners of war, former Iraqi army conscripts who are now refugees too. They didn't want to fight for Saddam and don't want to go back to Iraq where they'd possibly be executed. The following is a translation of a letter from a Kurdish Iraqi refugee in one of the camps. He is a far distant cousin of mine. When I last saw him he was a little boy in Kurdistan ... maybe it's a bit soft on the American and British regimes but for someone so young he's really getting a grasp of things. .... From S. (a Kurdish refugee).

Letter from a prisoner.

November 3rd 1991

To whom who in the most hopeless time of my life let fall the frost of Kurdistan mountains over my inflamed heart and offered to me the most beautiful and perfumed bunch of flowers together with a beautiful letter which brought back life again the bosom of my heart.

My dear ...

I regard and respect you . . . Regards that are more perfumed than the red buds of Kurdistan - regards and respect for your friends too.

Dear Brother,

From the light of your letter you would like to know news from me. I don't like to sadden you with this news and blank out from the

face of the day.

My friend and I (his name is Saber Aziz and from the people of Penjwen\*) came to Saudi and gave ourselves up to the US army on January the 21st. We were looked after by the Americans for some time in good conditions. But later on they handed us over to the Saudi army. It was like being transferred from daylight to dark night. That's why I say it's right when they say that life is a well of experience. But I don't know what to say about our lives because those above us are only concerned with protecting their positions and capital would sacrifice thousands of human beings in order to save itself.

Dear Brother,

Believe me, we haven't seen anything since January except the barbed wire from all four sides. We cannot see anything else; that's

why our life is the same thing day after day . . . etc. and this created a situation where many diseases threaten like psychological illnesses (depression and other things such as cutting one's self with razor blades and knives). When we see these things going on around us we feel we're living like animals but that's why people are driven to put their lives through these extra dangers.

For those who are guarding us I don't know if they recognise anyone else as human beings except themselves. No doubt, my brother, they themselves aren't human because they think we've run away from poverty. Consequently, anything we say, they reply: "isn't it food, what else do you want ?". But for these lepers life is only about eating. Now I can see the smile on your dry lips! I can see you saying Tah (the present letter writer T.N.) can just talk about food.

I don't know what to talk to you about but thousands of wishes to Kak Fukhraden\* in the Iraqi prison . . . With your permission let me talk about the regime that is using 14,000 Iraqi refugees deprived of all human rights like some playing card. Their treatment of us is rather like our treatment of animals in the harsh Kurdistan winter when we put food inside them for the next day . . . or if there is a problem sometime - meaning a fight - they don't respond, saying it's not God's will to come inside the compound. If there's fighting, then they flash their car lights at us, all the time laughing, just like looking at monkeys in the zoo. If one gets injured with a knife or a stave in the fighting, they merely demand the fighting cease so we can take the injured together to the hospital. They won't let anyone out of the compound until the fight is over.

Sometimes in the other compounds, people from Basra fight those from Nasria. One or two or more will get killed and many are injured. In August and September, there were demonstrations in the compounds we are living in. Each compound is two km square and contains 400 people. The demonstration was organised around the refusal of camp food and the wire fences were pushed over and

we got outside. Then just like their Big Brother Saddam they used chemicals on us such as tear gas as well as other gases killing ten people and injuring many. As Kurds say this is only a handful of grain from the sack (meaning like a drop in the ocean TN).

In August ten people were selected to go to see various embassies from throughout the world. One of them responded by saying you are all prisoners of war and no country would accept you. The British Embassy fortunately has been saying - all we can do is help the Iraqi people, especially Kurdish people, that's why I say if you don't consider this as a duty, write a letter in our name to the British Foreign Office requesting that some 200 Kurds want to go back to Kurdistan if possible.

I have received your letter but unfortunately no news about your family. Saber and other friends send regards to you.

Dear Brother,

If you have got an address in Iran please write a letter to take back to Kurdistan with one of the Saber's.

It is true that distance suffocates hope inside a human being but I always remember you; you have lit a candle in the darkness of my life and you have planted new hope in my hopeless heart . . . Dear Brother, I beg your pardon if this letter isn't sufficient but here we live outside the scale of humanity.

Dear Brother, if you have time please write a letter in my name - via Iran - to my Father with wishes from Saber. . . Kamil, Kak Aso, Mohammed are in the army hospital . . . they will phone you.

from T

1. Penjwen: an old town in Iraqi Kurdistan destroyed by the Baathists.
2. Kak: word of respect like Mr.



A pamphlet describing the uprising in Kurdistan and the poisonous role the Kurdish nationalists played in it has been published by BM Blob & Combustion (London WC1 3XX) price 65p plus postage.

**The Kurdish Uprising and Kurdistan's Nationalist Shop Front and its Negotiations with the Baathist/Fascist Regime** describes the operations of the Shora's (worker's councils) during the revolt, their limitations and the practices of the nationalists in undermining a popular rebellion.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTIONS IN VICTIMS OF THE GULF CONFLICT

Psychological responses of victims of combat may not be closely related to the severity of physical injury. Other factors which are of importance include the individual's previous character and experiences before combat, and the exact circumstances under which any injuries were acquired.

The normal response usually involves (in varying degrees):  
 (i) anxious preoccupation with what has happened - including dreams and vivid flashbacks in severe cases;  
 (ii) avoidance and withdrawal from what has happened - including numbness and seeming indifference;  
 (iii) anger or bitterness at what has happened - sometimes expressed as complaining or difficult behaviour.

These responses are very similar to those seen after a civilian accident which has proved to be a major threatening experience. The best way to help the victim is to bear in mind each of these three components and recognize them when and if they occur:

- (i) feelings of distress should be discussed in an open and accepting way. It may be difficult for macho service personnel to acknowledge strong emotions and there is nothing wrong with introducing the subject;
- (ii) avoidance and numbing can look like bravery or coolness but it can be followed by delayed reactions which are slower to recover and may be more disabling in the long-run; one useful approach is to discuss the victim's situation openly; the emotions are likely to follow when the victim is encouraged to acknowledge his experiences;
- (iii) anger and bitterness can be very trying if they are displaced onto staff and poison the ward atmosphere. They can be difficult to discuss directly, but it is important to try. Frank (not aggressive) discussion of behaviour is the best defence against getting into unhelpful confrontations with individuals.

Other psychological responses are relatively rare, but may occur more commonly than we are used to in routine NHS work.

- [1] Severe mental disorders - like schizophrenia or other paranoid states - can occasionally develop even in those with no psychiatric history.
- [2] Confusional states may be more common than is usual in young people, because of the combination of physical tissue damage and severe psychological trauma leading to agitation.
- [3] Conversion disorders and other abnormal illness behaviours: psychologically produced paralysis, pseudoseizures, blindness etc. Rare but extremely disabling when it does occur.

Any of these problems may be complicated by the co-existence of head injury with brain damage.

**Official instructions issued in the NHS during the Gulf War. Counsellor as war profiteer ?**



# THE URGE TO DESTROY

*With Slovenia and Croatia caught up in Euromania and 'Greater Serbia' resisting its advances, military escapism is enveloping the Balkans, Jim McFarlane concludes.*



**W**HILE OTHER CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN economies are being subjected to the rigours of market forces, the disintegrating Yugoslav economy has hastened a flight to assert political identity through the myth of ethnic nationalist homogeneity.

In 1989, Sonja Licht and Milan Nikolic anticipated that "if nationalism aims at preserving national identity by encapsulating it in a homogeneous society, if it is hostile toward other cultures and nations, if it advocates undemocratic methods in the process of emancipating its own nation, if it subordinates the human and civil rights of individuals to the rights of national collectivities and if it values past tradition higher than future perspectives, it can easily develop a totalitarian dynamic of its own, even in the struggle against an existing totalitarian regime".<sup>1</sup>

## NEW POLITICAL POWER

Articles in Iztok<sup>2</sup> and elsewhere had highlighted the influence of the new social movements and their hope for "an up-to-date formulation of the original idea of Yugoslavia as a trans-ethnic integration based on the classical tradition of democracy and economic efficiency (...) a guarantee for a solid multi-ethnic state, geared to the standards of contemporary Europe".<sup>3</sup> However, as Thomas Mastnak prophesied in H&N 7/8 the Peoples Army had become the last bastion of a Yugoslav League of Communists, all that was left of socialism was the "authoritarian contents".

By March 1990 the role of the NSMs was past. Leading personalities had graduated to positions of power in Slovenia. "The Movement for Religious Rights transformed itself into the Christian Democratic Party, and its leader became Prime Minister. Peace activist Janez Jansa took the post of defence minister and his friend Igor Bavcar, founder of Human Rights Council, was named interior minister".<sup>4</sup>

Although not replicated in Croatia, even Slovenia had succumbed to the imperatives of a drive towards independence and intended incorporation into a future expanded European Community. The re-election of Milosovic in Serbia and his overcoming of the demonstrations in March 1991 cemented the need to prepare for secession and the creation of the 50,000 strong Slovene Territorial Defence Force. Under the pretext of securing borders with Austria, Hungary and Italy the Yugoslav Peoples Army moved in and found themselves out-manoeuvred by the resistance of the Slovenes.

In contrast the balance of forces had changed considerably by the time the Serb-Croat conflict had escaped from the Chetnik (serbian fascist) influenced enclave around Knin. Any pretense of Federal authority over the Army had vanished. Initially the Croats had not prepared for conflict and spent time re-inventing the heraldry of pre-Communist regimes. Faced with the logistics of fighting on 3 fronts in Krajina, Banija and east Slavonia they lost up to 30% of the greater Croatia Tito had created for the republic while it was within the Federation.

## CHALLENGE FROM BELOW

Croatian autumn offensives against federal Army Barracks had released quantities of weapons and, although Air and Naval power was unleashed from Slavonia to Dalmatia, a stalemate was emerging with the weakened Federal forces and Serbian Militias consolidating gains and attacking vulnerable areas like Dubrovnik and Pakrac. Fascistic militias at the front such as the H.O.S. and Black Legion within the croatian forces had their own agenda of "National Socialism", strangely at odds with the imperatives of Euro incorporation desired by the 'democratic majority' in Croatia.

The Generals at the eastern Croatia front witnessed the mass desertion of reservists from southern Serbian cities such as Kragujevac, the 'crossing over' of Croat commanders at Vukovar and the October military conscription which was largely confined to Serbs and Montenegrins. The memory of the mothers' protests in August in Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo served a reminder of potential civil protests if a combination of economic impoverishment and emboldened anti-militarism was to shake the warmongering of the ruling elites bent on destruction and sacrificing the 'pawns' on the nationalist chessboard.





#### GENERALISED BARBARISM

The roots of the Yugoslav conflict have been charted by Neil Fernandez in his article reprinted in *Yugoslavery*<sup>1</sup>, which takes us through the new post-World War 1 State, in the context of "proletarian defeat", the rise of fascism amongst Serbs, Croats and Albanians, the carnage of the World War 2 resistance and the path to power of the Communist Party led by Tito. The emergence of the distinctive economic and political organisation of self-management was rooted in the refusal to submit to Stalin and Cominform policy of the early 50s, to create Joint Stock Companies and transfer capital and machinery from eastern Europe to aid post-War Soviet reconstruction.

Far from ushering in a 'socialist system and workers control' and workers participation in management, the Yugoslav experiment led to a decentralised state capitalism with technocrats as Managers and Party officials. Although the text breaks off in 1967, it avoids any triumphalist conclusions: identifying the weaknesses of wildcat strikes in 1965 and in subsequent years and identifying the north/south tensions and other measures that have stimulated the resurgence of ethnic nationalism.

Back to the future, the conflict is projected by Glenny<sup>2</sup> to "spread from Croatia to Bosnia, from Bosnia to Sanjak Novi Pazar, from Sanjak to Kosovo, a chain of events that leads to the ultimate Balkan horror, the Macedonian question". Potentially involving Albania, Bulgaria and Greece, the Independence vote in September 1991 promises that the sequence of conflict involving the Serbian juggernaut is a possible occurrence, although the less chauvinistic Macedons are promising no military resistance.

Meanwhile, Serbian Democratic Party enclaves in northern Bosnia and Eastern Hercegovina have declared secession. Clashes between Muslim, Croat and Serbian militias east of Mostar were destined to spread in the tangled ethnic mosaic of the disintegrating republic. In addition to the always present potential of an explosion in the Albanian dominated province of Kosovo, the focus for conflict could switch to Bosnia-Hercegovina, whether EC sponsored peace efforts succeed or not in defusing Serb-Croat hostilities in the north. Disruption of economic activity, whether industrial, agricultural or tourist is severe, especially in Croatia. In Serbia, the Socialist Party leadership, in tandem with the Communist Party Military has a programme that subordinates economic reform to conquest and hegemony.

With both Croat and Serb protagonists cloaked in the mantle of past atrocities and mutual fear the supremacy of the irrational is currently ensured. The democratisation/enlightened nationalism/new social movements current has dissipated and is marginalised. Past workers strikes have been unable to supercede national identities. It is ironic that the pamphlet which indicated that the Yugoslav students had views as advanced as their western counterparts in 1968/9 should end with the quotation: "it is not only a conflict between production and creation, but in a larger sense - and here I have in mind the West as well as the East - between routine and adventure".

- 1 In Across Frontiers Vol 5 No. 2. PO Box 2382, CA 94702. USA (\$20 sub).
- 2 Reprinted in Edinburgh Review 83
- 3 from the Tübingen declaration, quoted in (1) above, Jan 1989. This recalls a conversation I had in the office of the former Alliance of Socialist Youth in Ljubljana in autumn 1988 when I suggested that EC Membership and nationhood would be pursued by Slovenia.
- 4 Paul Hocken in New Statesman & Society, 5th July 1991.
- 5 From BM Blob WCIN 3XX. £2.
- 6 Misha Glenny, BBC Central Europe Correspondent in NS & S, 9th July 1991.
- 7 M. Krleža in Politika, Dec 1968 quoted in Fredy Perlman, "Revolt in Socialist Yugoslavia, Black & Red.

LAIBACH: "Politics is the highest form of popular culture, and we who create the contemporary European pop culture consider ourselves politicians."

The SCIPION NASICE SISTERS THEATER banishes art and religion as the mirror images of ideology and thus abolishes them.

The COSMOKINETIC THEATER RED PILOT: "OBSERVATORY does not reflect, OBSERVATORY does not destroy, OBSERVATORY only witnesses destruction!"

IRWIN: "We are artists and not politicians. When the Slavik question is resolved once and for all, we want to finish our lives as artists."



# A SOVIET AUTOPSY

*After the August coup attempt John Barrett examines the entrails.*

**P**ERESTROIKA HAS BEEN SHOWN TO BE BASED on the entirely false assumption that the Soviet system was reformable. The twin palliatives advanced by the 1984 Soviet leadership of restructuring and 'open-ness' have not removed Soviet society's intractable problems. Gorbachev's past line that modernisation was necessary simply to shake out an obsolete superstructure obscuring an essentially healthy base was either a ploy designed to reassure socialist fundamentalists or a crazy misjudgement of the situation. The fact is that only the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and of some of its past satellites in Europe, will achieve the marketisation Gorbachev purports to favour. And even if that happens the consequences are by no means a foregone conclusion.

Perhaps what characterises most forcefully the poverty of thought about the Soviet Bloc in the 70s was the fact that recognised experts regularly confessed to their surprise in the 80s at the rapidity and depth of the collapse of Communism. Part of the blame for this must lie in the prevalence of the view that these were **totalitarian** societies which for some reason escaped the dynamics of change and decay which afflicts other systems. Forgivable in persecuted dissidents this analysis was yoked to a cold war idea which counterposed an idealised open 'Western' society to a monolithic Soviet opposite. A myth of Communism's irreversibility was nurtured among certain Rightists, frightening themselves like children at midnight with tales of permanent terror and eternal darkness. The 'totalitarian' idea overlooked both the economic realities of the Soviet Bloc and the survival of traditions and customs from before 1917 amongst the people. In fact, totalitarianism is the vanishing point towards which all socio-political systems drive, but never reach. By emphasising the **political** control of society over the crumbling economic reality adherents of the totalitarian notion both forgot the element of consent necessary for any state's survival, and over-estimated the power of the centre to change that society.



The fate of actually existing dissidents in the Soviet Bloc was different, although no less unforeseen. By the 70s they had embarked on a strategy of 'anti-politics' (variations of which can be read in the works of Konrad, Michnik and Havel - see *Here and Now* passim) which had some resemblance to the movements in the 'West' in the 60s to refuse participation in modern capitalism. The destiny of these movements were very different. East European anti-politics was **not** co-opted by the existing official oppositions (there were none), nor was it transformed into raw material for a burgeoning entertainments industry, nor was it destroyed - fates all reserved for various 'Western' movements. The communist command economy ruled out co-option by the entertainments business, or integration into the checks and balances of a democratic power structure, but it could not annihilate physically the opposition movements because of the unspoken approval they had from significant sectors of the population. In the early 80s at the price of exclusion from power East European oppositionists retained their identity (the best example of this is Poland under martial law).

The integration of the 'Western' 60s generation (into academia, entertainments, the local state etc.) in comparison with the attempted repression and eventual survival of E. European oppositionists signalled forcibly that US/European/East Asian capitalism was better able to maintain itself (because it was able to use opposition as an internal control mechanism) than Soviet-style bureaucratic centralism. The US and European strategy of 'empowering' allegedly self-constituted constituencies through the elevation of their media boosted stars and leaders, in order to maintain the system's legitimacy, while avoiding the costly changes necessary to deal with inequality, social disintegration and ecological destruction, has proved more efficient and less de-stabilising than the Soviet strategy. The reason why Soviet-style systems did not attempt to co-opt the opposition is no better illustrated than in Poland where tentative power-sharing led to the political destruction of the old elite, even though ex-communists managed to hang on to economic power by miraculously converting themselves overnight into new entrepreneurs.

Along with 'anti-politics' E. European dissidents developed the notion of 'Civil society' as a non-political, pluralistic way of life beneath the communist system. Initially viewed as an alternative both to communism and consumer capitalism the idea was suggestive of a parallel public sphere which could operate within either system but nurture and protect its own values and interests against the hegemonic power. To date the appearance of originality which these ideas had is looking badly tarnished. Pluralism is certainly proliferating within the corpses of Soviet-style regimes, but when the hegemonic power finally collapses, what replaces it is decidedly uncivil war (as in Yugoslavia - see 'The Urge to Destroy' in this issue) or a rehash of liberal neo-corporatist politics which civil society politics was supposed to be an alternative for (as in Havel's Czecho-Slovakia).



The fragments that make up this pluralism cannot, however, be put back into the bottle. Far from engaging with society in a 'civil' way, these fragments, where they are not actively resisting the new economic reforms of their new masters (the erstwhile civil society ideologists) are settling scores old and new with other uncivil fragments. A note of caution must be introduced here. In these futurist times the tendency is to lump all traditions into one category and attach adjectives such as 'pre-modern', 'atavistic', 'reactionary', 'nationalist' etc to it. Some of these fragments deserve better than this. On the one hand there is the return of an essentially 'modern' tradition, namely nationalism, product of the strivings of the 19th century intellectuals, the authenticity of which is best judged by the remarkable similarity of 'traditional' peasant dress from Portugal to Poland; on the other hand is the return of genuinely pre-modern customs and communitarian impulses some of whose roots lie in pre-Christian times and which have survived because they remained of genuine use and benefit for people in dark times.

As far as the actual 'civil society' politicians are concerned, they have failed - except in the one area where they ostensibly claimed no brief, namely state power, where they have replaced the old communist power structure.

No doubt in reaction against Marxist-Leninist economism E. European and Soviet dissidents tended to favour the political and cultural over the economic. But in fact, Soviet societies' independence from the global market was largely illusory, and that, together with the increasing difficulty of getting basic goods to people within these countries, took away the last legitimating support for these regimes. In competition with the rest of capitalism Communism was unable to modernise, to change its industry from extensive to intensive development, to pass on skills and inventions forged in the military sector to the consumer sector, or to improve agriculture. While Soviet-style economies could hide their ineffectiveness behind a generalised 'Stakhanovism' which exhorted (and extorted) more work from the working class in the name of 'fighting fascism' or 'building communism', the day of reckoning could be deferred. But with the Brezhnev compromise, and the consequent tuning-down of the political rhetoric to that of economic targets and performance, real reality was no longer camouflaged. Gorbachev's version of stability and economic growth gained no legitimacy when he provided neither, while people's expectation of a better life remain irreversible.

The problem for the Soviet Union in particular, and it applies to other ex-Soviet societies in direct proportion to the extent they have not discarded the old ruling apparatus, is that to implement the market reforms the Soviet leadership believe to be the only solution for the Union, requires austerity, social dislocation, unemployment and greater class division. The old power structure, however bureaucratically enthusiastic, simply did not have the legitimacy to push such painful reforms through. It is considerably doubtful whether the new, post-coup apparatus has that confidence of the people to do so either. The only residues of legitimacy lie with the ethnic, religious and nationalist fragments which are by no means automatically on the side of 'Marketisation'.

In order for there to be successful market penetration of any country or territory there has to be a system of laws and a constitutional framework which will guarantee private property, recognise and enforce binding contracts, safeguard certain civil rights and back up the nation's currency to say nothing of policing the inevitable discontent. Despite the myths of the free market libertarians state intervention has always preceded successful marketisation, both by introducing protectionist measures to nurture fledgling industries, and to accumulate capital in order to finance crucial projects of infrastructure. East Asian capitalism is only the latest example which proves the point. In the Soviet Union both the establishment of a constitutional framework and judicious state intervention would be overseen by corrupted bureaucrats already hopelessly implicated in past debacles.

In fact the Communist Party itself was in much the same position as any ancient regime threatened by rapid market reforms and would have, and still will as individuals, resisted and subverted such changes. The Soviet Union as it stands now, including the 'Party' and the state structures, simply does not have the legitimacy to carry through market reforms successfully. Disintegration of the Union, which is already beginning, is the absolute precondition for successful economic liberalisation.

What sources of legitimisation remain? The most obvious, and the one which global capitalism seems to be putting its money on is nationalism. The 'suppressed' nationalities of the Union and beyond have thrown up leaders apparently untainted by involvement in the Communist apparatus, although this itself is less and less certain (eg: Croatia's Tudjman, Ukraine's Kravchuk). Decentralisation and devolution become the watchwords of renescent capitalism. The absence of fundamental values enjoying broad political support is likely to speed up the process of the centre's disintegration - the return of 19th century nationalism will provide sufficient popular support to enable states to be formed and markets imposed.



However as I mentioned above, nationalism is not the only 'fragment' enjoying popular support. In fact, what has survived 70 years of Soviet Communism (and less) is neither a civil society of liberal minded individuals practising inter-subjectivity, nor a civil society of enterprising individuals on the brink of participating in contract formation and capital accumulation. What has survived is traditional society. Post socialist traditional society can trace its roots far beyond the relatively modern phenomenon of nationalism, it has a culture long before anyone attempted to demean it by calling it 'popular', and it involved systems of mutual aid as incompatible with consumer capitalism as with Communism. At the same time other contemporary fragments exist, with no history past the last few years which sustained and maintain opposition without falling for the temptations of power. Then there is a working class with its own inveterate traditions, likely to be the first in line for breaking when marketisation comes. One danger here is that the process of silencing and suppressing this class may push it towards identification with, and alliance to, the old, similarly attacked, Soviet bureaucracy. The potential all these 'fragments' may have in the future has not been lost on the ruling class, new or old. The resurrection of Solidarity in Poland (1989) by the State which had imprisoned and persecuted it was a desperate attempt to reconstruct a unifying force upon an already divided nation (see Here & Now 7/8 'The Economic Movement and The Polish Opposition'). All that in fact was achieved was the demise of the old ruling elite and its replacement by Walesa's mob, shakily perched upon an unravelling society.

So despite bourgeois triumphalism, there is much that is uncertain and risky for those seeking the full integration of the territory of what was the Soviet Bloc into the global market economy. The return of arrogantly 'transcended' past traditions together with the memories of the pleasures and adventures of fighting the system (any system!) do not bode a smooth passage for intensive commodification of these territories. And in the process of encountering submerged and marginal ways of living the normal and the familiar come into question, and other forms of social organisation beyond the twin evils of nationalism and Capital begin clamouring to join the game.



# The Myth of Professionalism

Colin Webster questions the power of the professional.

*'Fish in water. - Since the all-embracing distributive machinery of highly concentrated industry has superseded the sphere of circulation, the latter has begun a strange post-existence. As the professions of the middle-man lose their economic basis, the private lives of countless people are becoming those of agents and go-betweens; indeed the entire private domain is being engulfed by a mysterious activity that bears all the features of commercial life without there being actually any business to transact'.*

Theodore Adorno.

PROFESSIONS AND PROFESSIONALISM HAVE been slagged off from all parts of the political spectrum at various times and from wildly different intellectual traditions. Adorno wrote the above in 1944, even then suggesting that the rise of professional type occupations is predicated on changes in economic organization towards large companies and a decline of small business. The decline of the traditional *Petit-bourgeoisie* coupled with an expansion of the education system in the post-war period feed an inexorable growth of professional occupations. But perhaps most perceptively, Adorno recognized that the proliferation of professional activity increasingly blurs the separation between the public world of work and private world of relief from work, and, that the nature of this professional work increasingly takes the form of intrusions into the private sphere through surveillance and control of behaviour. Here professionals seem unable to distinguish between work and non-work, thus a condition is created whereby their own personal lives are invaded by work imperatives. At the same time much professional work involves the invasion of other's private lives, both the lives of friends and acquaintances and of 'clients' lives. What is often forgotten in this is the extent to which professionals must police their own behaviour as a condition of maintaining credibility. The overall effect is to weaken any will to think independently and critically about social arrangements, instead self-absorption becomes the preferred *modus operandi*.

Since Adorno's diatribe the thesis of 'the professional conspiracy' has found many adherents, from Illich's 'Disabling Professions', Habermas' notion of 'professional experts colonising everyday life', H&N's critiques, Foucault's delineation of 'knowledge/power', to populist neo-conservative arguments about professional closed shops and professions being parasitic on wealth-creating sectors. Perhaps the most impressive and sustained study that lends some support to the thesis is Perkin's historical plotting of *The Rise of Professional Society-England Since 1880*. Perkin who hails from the social democratic centre-left, characterizes post-capitalist/post-industrial England as having become a 'professional society', reconstituted from traditional class society, and sets out to answer "... how did professionalism as an organizing principle (of society) come to supersede class ...". In essence Perkin's argument is that the rise of professional society saw an evolving philosophical, economic and political battle, not between workers and capitalists against professional interests as such, but a rounding of the private sector professionals who ran the large corporations and their academic and journalistic supporters upon the public sector professionals. The former saw the latter as a burden upon the



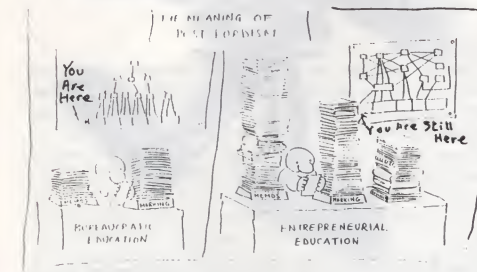
private sector in two senses, as consumers of the wealth which it produced and as controllers and regulators of its managers' freedom of action. This eventually finds its apotheosis in the 1970's and 1980's in a triple backlash against special interest groups, big government and corporatism. Perkin exposes these New Right arguments and concludes that 'professional society' is a good thing but must rid itself of the see-saw of Left and Right and professional rivalries that are counter productive. Despite the obvious inadequacies of Perkin's overall analysis (after all, both public and private sectors are profoundly wedded to a highly commodified, archaically undemocratic society), the historical account is excellent.

More generally, professional work raises the question of the relationship between public and private life, paid and domestic labour, sexual and ethnic divisions of labour, and indeed the nature of work itself. The consequences of these relationships for professionals themselves are particularly marked amongst women. Because of the particular pressures placed upon the caring professions (social work, nursing, school teaching, etc.) to be selfless, putting the needs of others before their own, women find themselves in a constant double-bind in attempting to manage the competing demands of home and work - controlled by externally defined professional standards which take little account of the wider familial and societal demands upon women to fulfil what are often contradictory or incompatible roles.

This experience of professional work by women, is in an intensified way, symptomatic of an overriding orientation amongst 'caring professions' to **make work** and **work hard** - imperatives amply supported and imposed by guilt-tripping colleagues. Women also fulfil the role of feminizing the management of social control, making this primary purpose of 'caring professionals' somehow more acceptable to 'clients'.

Leaving aside the critical commentary I want to now offer something that I hope places 'professionalism' in a more 'realistic' light than detractors and critics allow when they ascribe over-arching, reifying traits to professional work, and implausible analysis of the position of professionals in post-capitalist commodity society sometimes bordering on the paranoia of conspiracy theory. I do not wish to defend 'professionalism' (many critics are in many respects correct), but to brush aside rhetoric in order to look 'inside' it. **Professional work is after all still work in the sense of there being influences, controls and pressures on this type of work associated with the wage labour relationship. I want to step into the nature of professional work so as to demonstrate it is not all radical critics make it out to be. To challenge the view that professionals are mostly powerful actors, necessarily pernicious in their effects.** In particular to ask what it is professionals are supposed to know and do that supposedly makes them so powerful and what consequences follow for (professional-professional: professional-client: client-client): (Society) configurations.

What then, are professionals supposed to know and how is this knowledge employed in practice? What is the nature of professional work? What are the effects and consequences of these knowledges and actions upon professionals themselves? The following issues may provide a framework within which to address our questions:



The relationship between professional language/knowledge (expert knowledge) and ordinary every day language/knowledge is such that the former does not address the common people or common, specialized trades - higher knowledge is still expressed in terms unfamiliar to and impenetrable by the many and discussed by techniques of discourse that are opaque to outsiders. These language games employed by professionals serve to position them in a hierarchy of values and rewards vis-a-vis others. The more complex and opaque, and the longer it takes to learn these special languages, the higher the economic and/or status rewards and privileges that accrue. But this positioning has also to be legitimized culturally to others, especially to those who in relative terms lose out most. Others must be made to believe in the inherent fairness of these processes. Doctors are given high social standing whereas social workers are not, which means social workers have had to work much harder at strategies of legitimation. Here discourse is a form of cultural capital valorized so as to both exclude others, establish distinctions, and enhance/maintain one's exchange value.

On the other hand, what is the relationship then, between those who create, transmit and apply expert or formal knowledge and the actual exercise of power? In what way can it be said accurately that **knowledge is power**? Can we speak of the 'tyranny of the experts', 'social control', 'hegemony', 'professional dominance', or 'monopoly of discourse' to characterize professionals relationship to knowledge and power? Friedson, a sociologist of the professions poses the issue with admirable clarity:

"What, then, of professional power? As human institutions, professions can manifest different kinds of power. As associations they are interest groups that can exercise economic and political power. As credentialed incumbents in key positions in agencies and organizations they can exercise bureaucratic, even state, powers. But the same can be said of a variety of non-professional occupations. The key question for the professions is whether the exercise of those powers also advances or imposes the formal knowledge by which they distinguish themselves from other occupations. Is professional power the special power of knowledge or merely the ordinary power of vested economic, political, and bureaucratic interest? That is the critical question."

Turning now to how professionals employ the formal knowledge or discipline that they claim to represent, we find that this knowledge is systematically **transformed** by professionals with differing perspectives created both by the particular demands of the work they do and by the demands of their particular clients. In particular, professional administrators/managers and practitioner's, given their differences in perspective and interest, each transform in different ways formal knowledge produced and advanced by academics and researchers.

Administrators/managers make arbitrary selections from formal knowledge that best fit what they believe to be the practical situation of the organization for which they are responsible and proceed to reduce what they select to an artificially limited and consistent set of rules, guidelines or procedures. Issues of state regulation, income, and client pressure figure in their plan. Formal knowledge is simplified and rationalized, given greater formality than it actually possesses. Here we see the imposition of bureaucratic and procedural rules on individual initiative and the scope of professional work.

In contrast, practitioners accept that portion of the formal knowledge and of guidelines of managers which is useful to them in their variable day-to-day work experience, while rejecting that which is not, in the light of their pragmatic judgement, based on the work situation confronting them. The resistance of clients composes an important part of that work situation. In other words formal knowledge is applied inconsistently and informally. Professional workers can be as involved in conflict with managerialism and as resistant to managerial strategy as other groups of workers.

In each case there is a different transformation of formal knowledge into 'working knowledge'. That is 'knowledge' comes to be a source of workplace control and resistance used by professionals against **both managers and** in some cases clients.

Professional administrators/managers, however, must promulgate guidelines designed to influence the way professional work is to be performed or evaluated - they must assert a definite standard. But here again, the evidence on standard setting suggests dilution and compromise - often as not **'community standards'** are in operation - that is what is widely accepted and performed by practitioners as custom and practice rather than what is recommended by the theory and research of formal knowledge.

At the level of everyday work, practising professionals have little control of policy-making, little capacity to define general public needs and problems, and little power over the allocation of resources except those immediately at hand. It is the administrator/manager who has the power to allocate those resources to the practitioners as well as specifying what resources the practitioners can dispense to clients and under what circumstances. This fact alone gives the lie to an undifferentiating claim that professionals simply control, dominate or manipulate clients.



Apart from these general differences and conflicts between managers and practitioners, there are specific differences in situations that vary from profession to profession. The most important stems from the nature of the professions clients and relative power they have. A crucial source of power practitioners have over their clients is their capacity to serve as **gatekeepers** of desired resources - whether educational grades, drugs, financial benefits, or whatever. Some professions, however, serve clients who are powerful, sophisticated, and well organized, e.g. engineering, architecture, and, increasingly science are typically dependent on clients who possess capital and are therefore powerful. Personal Service professions (teachers, social workers, solicitors) face 'public opinion' constructed and orchestrated by the mass media, which if this were to be representative of a genuine democratic public sphere, would greatly enhance accountability. The reality, however is a vicarious and uninformed populism about 'restrictive practices' and 'persecution' of alleged child-abusers by social workers (the latter resting in part on a mischievous defence of the sanctity and privacy of the family). Whatever kernel of truth can be found in these onslaughts, the real issue of how moral responsibility should be understood is ignored.

**This fluid and complex reality evokes a picture of interaction and negotiation by active human beings which calls into serious question the value of seeing professionals and the professions as all-powerful in contemporary western societies. Or, does it?** Having suggested we subject the supposed knowledge claims of the professions to critical scrutiny both in terms of the knowledge itself and what it means in practice, and that professionals themselves are the object of managerial strategy and imposition, we should now ask, what do they actually do?

**What then are professionals supposed to do and what are the effects and consequences of these actions both upon the 'client' and professionals themselves?** In particular what are the relationships between professional power and organisational settings and the institutionalisation of 'clients'? Through what processes and with what outcomes for clients, are professionals implicated? The essential task of professional work is to classify and categorize people and objects in terms of 'client group needs' and 'services delivery'. Professional power operates on the basis of processes of classification, categorization and definition - the mad, the bad, the evil, the inadequate, the ill and the profitable, marketable and exchangeable. This bread and butter of professional work engenders anomalies and creates the paradox of boundary-blurring, disruption and subversion of boundaries. Yet definitions offered vary and may have remarkable and unforeseen consequences. Becoming a client is not always a progression into dependency, nor in the case of social control professional-client transactions, into badness, madness, evilness or wickedness. The rule-breaker may be coaxed into any one of a number of 'roles'. Those who straddle categories are sometimes awarded non-human or superhuman qualities whilst at the same time all classification systems must engender anomalies because none can be exhaustive. It is intrinsic to organization that it produces the unmanageable cases that subvert it (this is the effect of 'satanic abuse' on social work). Finally, organisational or bureaucratic ideology/ethos determines the ways in which professionals categorise people on the basis of 'need' or 'blame', whilst at the same time, stifling operational autonomy and innovation amongst professionals.

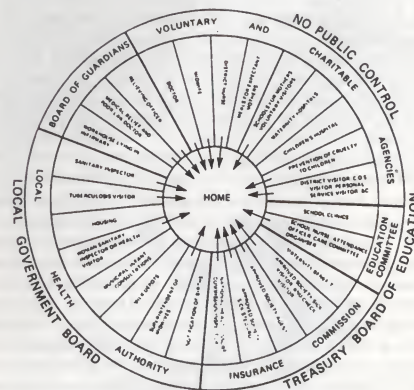
On the other hand professionals and their institutions operate so as to selectively offer relative 'successes' - the redeemed, reformed, deserving, healthy and changed - to 'justify' their supposed competence, position and power, whilst surrounding themselves with a sea of 'failure' (presumably to point towards 'the immense task ahead', 'the work to be done' etc.). What this invariably does is to override any substantive justice or concern with/for the 'client'. The central paradox for professionals is they need 'clients' - both those who can be 'cured', 'helped', 'rehabilitated', and those who resist reform and help.

This can be illustrated by reference to Scott's 1960's study of Blind Institutions in the U.S. which proclaimed that the blind are manufactured by the special agencies which 'care' for them. This remarkable conclusion rests on the case that Blind Institutions operate so as to select a few eligible candidates for transformation into the acceptably functioning blind. Apart from these chosen few to be redeemed, made educable and employable, the rest are discarded. Blindness is mostly partial-sightedness and this is the case amongst those discarded, but instead this group are methodically encouraged to play the blind role, relinquishing any use of sight and adopting the methods of the utterly sightless. They are required to learn incapacity - a kind of orderly incompetence. Professionals select categories of blindness and define what these mean and this flows from institutions dependence on the continuous production of conspicuous and sympathetic successes. This, in turn, comes from the need to secure funds and carve out satisfying (?) professional careers and/or ensure survival. Clearly, the malleable and changed provide a mirror image of the intractable and recalcitrant, and the equation between them is constructed so as to provide a manipulable play or justification for expenditure and effort. A case of the blind leading the blind!

All this raises in my mind the issue of trust. In conditions of postmodernity, especially, how is it possible to trust professionals and professional-client relationships? In particular, transactions associated with supposed expert knowledge? In a different context Anthony Giddens has suggested:

"Trust may be defined as confidence in the reliability of a person or system, regarding a given set of outcomes or events, where that confidence expresses a faith in the probity or love of another, or in the correctness of abstract principles (technical knowledge)".

If we are moving towards a social system concerned more centrally with information, whilst at the same time there is a plurality of heterogeneous claims to knowledge (as postmodernist theory claims), in which science does not have a privileged place, then this places unusual strains and pressures on professionals work with clients, as well as on the whole legitimacy of the claims made for the basis of these relationships. On the other hand as social relations become increasingly **disembedded** - lifted out from local, traditional contexts of interaction - then professional work and associated **expert systems** are increasingly likely to be based on **trust**, if they are to work.



The Invasion of the Home from D. Pepler 1915

the expert knowledge which professionals apply - something which clients cannot usually check exhaustively themselves. Trust in expert systems, is an article of 'faith', by the lay person. Expert systems are also disembedding mechanisms because they remove social relations from the immediacies of context, by providing 'guarantees' of expectations across situations at different times and places - providing standards and values which are interdependent, interchangeable and transferable. In both these senses then, trust is disembedded - there is no need to trust someone whose activities were continually visible and thought processes were transparent, or to trust any system whose workings were wholly known and understood. The prime condition of requirements for trust is not only lack of power but lack of full information.

'Trust' is connected to 'risk' which originates with the understanding that unanticipated results may be a consequence of professional - client relationships, activities or decisions. These unintended consequences of professional knowledge and practice may or may not be ameliorated by **reflexivity** which consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character.

Expert systems can be seen as a relatively new type of credentialled symbolic 'universal' exchange, at least amongst those holding cultural capital - they are however, unlikely to supplant monetization, that is the centrality of money as the primary medium of exchange - but are likely to continue to carry considerable value in relatively non-commodified spheres. In this sense there is an interest by professionals (in the public sector ?) in ensuring the creation of symbolic tokens which carry ascendancy relative to private capital - this is the real meaning of Perkin's thesis viz. private versus public professionals.

Finally, if we now address our question about professional power the answer surely lies in **the powers of association** and in particular who is powerful and what is power in the situation. When considering the configuration (Professional-Professional: Professional-Client: Client-Client): (Society), it is useful to bear in mind Bruno Latours paradox of power: "... when an actor simply *has* power nothing happens and s/he is powerless; when on the other hand, an actor *exerts* power it is others who perform the action." It appears from this that power is not something one can possess - indeed it must be treated as a consequence rather than as a cause of action. On this model power is not the diffusion of commands from a central source, but relies and results from the actions of a chain of agents each of whom 'translates' it in accordance with his/her own projects. Since power is composed **here and now** by enrolling many actors in a given political and social arrangement, and it is not something that can be stored up and given to the powerful by a pre-existing 'society', it follows that the nature of society is negotiable, a practical and revisable matter, and not something which can be determined once and for all by the radical critic or social observer who attempts to stand outside it. Accordingly, we should seek to analyze the ways in which people are associated together and their methods of association that offer ways of linking people that may last longer than any given interaction. Professional associations are such a method and cannot simply be seen as **having** power - *in potentia* - but **exerting** power - *in actu* - where the 'clients' themselves are performing the action and not the 'professional'. Clients constitute the power transaction because no matter how much power professionals appear to accumulate, it is always necessary to obtain it from the clients who are doing the acting. The reservoir of professional power is full only so long as clients dutifully fill it. Apart from the implication for those who use professionals that they themselves are implicated in their own 'subordination' and may wish to withhold trust, the actors in the configuration (professionals and client) are themselves bound together to create relationships that may serve to keep us all in place.

PROFESSIONALISM is the ideology by which the strategy of 'professionalization' is made to appear as an upgrading of the status of an occupation rather than a degradation of the concept.

The concept of profession has certainly been extended well beyond its literal reference as part of the terminological inflation which accompanies the process itself.

Various categories may be distinguished:

1. **semi-professions:** This term would apply literally to occupational categories which have partially succeeded in acquiring some of the real as against symbolic appurtenances. Examples include teachers and social workers. (\*)
2. **quasi-professions:** in contrast to the above, these are (as the prefix indicates) quite ambivalent: it is not at all certain whether they are or are not to be regarded as professions. This is not a half-way stage, because an occupation can remain permanently in this ambiguous state. The ambiguity is intrinsic to the occupation, not a mere uncertainty on the part of social scientists about how to classify it. Examples include the police, nurses.
3. **pseudo-professions:** here professionalism is a definite disguise: this term may be applied to any occupation whatsoever, and is.
4. **phony professions:** in contrast to the preceding category which covers real occupations whose 'professional' status is, however, unreal in the sense that it is not accepted as valid by anyone else, phoney professions are occupations whose very existence is of dubious legitimacy. It is not just the claim to a specific 'expertise' or form of knowledge that is the subject of skepticism but more basically whether the activity itself has any function or reason for existence other than as a means of self-enrichment for its practitioners.

(\*) subclassifications within these categories may be called **semi-professions** or even **hemi-demi-semi-professions** (eg. specialists in curriculum development on programmes for those with special educational needs, or specialists in the evaluation of systems for the delivery of bereavement counselling services; most of these belong in category 4.)

D.K.

#### Contradictions and some advice for Professionals

We can liken the contradictory position of professionals to that of the Brahmin Caste in India, and in particular to the Brahminical sceptical tradition. Mary Douglas, an anthropologist, sought to locate within the social structure the niche in which radical scepticism tends to flourish. The Brahminical sceptical tradition is compared with Western idealist movements in the 19th and 20th centuries and with sceptical trends of today. She describes a social position that combines considerable privilege with lack of influence in an arbitrarily powerful political system which gives rise to moral contradictions and insoluble problems, and goes on to suggest:

"In such a position a denial of the reality of the world indicates a level of thought in which intellectual coherence may be possible. The converse situation, where claiming authority and holding power seem feasible, is more compatible with affirmation of reality than with its negation."

Perhaps radical scepticism best represents the social position of professionals and should be endorsed by them as their best hope in the situation. Also, to hold onto the fact that, after all, professional work is only work not a way of life. Having to be both 'nice' and anxious at the same time leads to neurosis whereas a healthy disrespect for things the way they are may lead to a modicum of self respect and an openness to change, even if that means one commits a kind of social suicide - not identifying with one's job or career.



# Teaching Johnny to Grieve

*D.K. takes a look at Bereavement Counselling*

**T**HIS IS A BUSINESS I FEEL VERY STRONGLY about. Readers will feel perhaps that the matter doesn't warrant such anger, which even a sympathetic reading might see as disproportionate. But I can't help it. I regard the current epidemic of Counselling as a social catastrophe; the battalions of 'Care' professionals of every kind are to me an object of moral outrage. I have a deep abhorrence for their pretensions, their jargon, their very existence. I'm sure I'm not alone in despising the whole business, and I do owe them an explanation.

The trade now operates on a vast scale. It is like pornography: the more you study it, the less one is able to tolerate its existence as a relatively innocuous response to some rather unfortunate human 'needs', and the more it reveals itself as a gigantic and perverse exploitation of real miseries, a racket which adds insult to injury, generating income from the very unhappiness it has in fact no interest at all in alleviating. Like pornography again, its sheer enormity can make any opposition disheartened at its momentum and apparent invulnerability.

The most obscene specialism in this field of emotional colonialism must be Bereavement Counselling. In no other area does the arrogance of the 'specialist', their trained inability to perceive the particular reality in front of them, expose its objective cruelty in such starkness. This is because the realities confronted in grief are a universal reality. The petty jargonisations and mealy-mouthed philosophies which designate the absolute as a 'field' or an 'issue' to be 'addressed' (the talk of 'coping mechanisms' and 'dealing with denial' etc) cannot fail to insult the human species itself: asking someone to talk to a grief counsellor is no less irrelevant - **impertinent** - than asking them to fill in a questionnaire. To call it ridiculous is too generous. Insensitivity is often forgiven when the motivation is accepted. The motivation of counsellors is always necessarily mercenary (by definition since it is the professional project that has priority over the particular 'case' in hand).

One of the leading entrepreneurs in this booming area, Dr Colin Murray Parkes, chairman of Cruse affirms (in the false modest fashion typical of the trendy professions who are at pains to deny mendaciously that they impose standardised models) that counsellors must beware of imposing their views of what constitutes "good grieving". This is the dishonesty by which 'counselling' eschews the giving of advice thus showing the same flagrant contempt for semantics as their practice shows to the sentiments of their clients when they fail to acknowledge their 'need' for the service offered.

It has been noted how the town of Lockerbie had to endure an invasion of 'helpers' after suffering the horrors from the skies. Firemen spoke of the 'contrived empathy' of these naive ghouls. Yvonne McEwen, reported in *The Independent* in October this year, put her finger on one of the lynchpins of today's psychocracy in saying "Many of these counsellors just won't accept that denial can be healthy, that not everyone wants to talk." There is indeed a veritable shibboleth about 'denial' and a faith in the healing power of talk worthy of an interrogator. 'Denial' is now the main weapon by which those peddling their spurious doctrines try to knock holes in their 'clients' discourse to gain an inroad. It functions as an accusation of resistance to the truth possessed by the carrier of the so-called care. (Of course they themselves will 'deny' that they are claiming any monopolies of truth, but they really do have something worth denying).



Iain Philpott, after the Marchioness disaster, said "we all got sick of being discussed by experts at conferences when no-one has actually come back to us to ask where they went wrong." The true magnitude of this affront can only be measured by recognising that such professional abuse of survivors is itself a promising subject for PhDs and publications in the trade journals.

Even those who have been helped have grievances. Barry Devonside, after Hillsborough, admits that some people "did feel persecuted by social workers coming in and telling them what was wrong and how to handle it. There were complaints that counsellors were far too forward and personal."

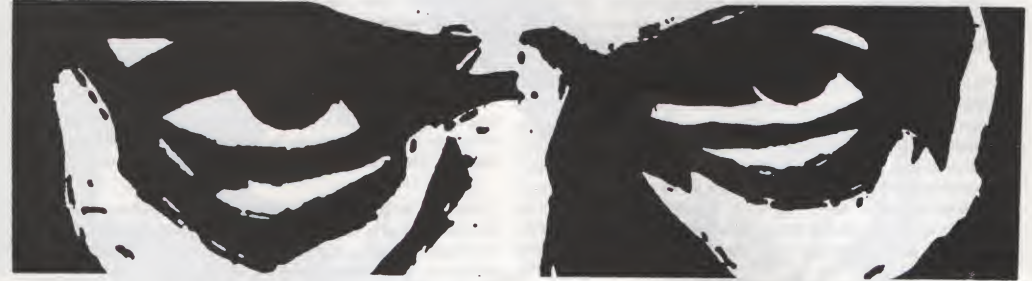
Like millions of others I have had dreadful bereavements. There will be more. But my acquaintance with these deaths confers no authority to ask of anyone else that they 'discuss' their own grief with me. The professional will be assured that I am claiming no homespun amateur remedies to compete with them. But on what grounds are their own 'qualifications' based? A course, some 'training' workshops, some canonical formulas in a textbook, a dissertation and an exam paper? It is perfectly true that this society's incompetence at dealing with death disqualifies its claims to be called a 'society'. But the growth of a new professional 'expertise' which justifies itself by reference to this spiritual impoverishment can only amount to further proof of the moral bankruptcy of the professionalisation of the lifeworld.

In those 'traditional societies' which offer the models of ritual and symbolic response to death, trades like undertaker and butcher are shrouded in taboos; they are vicariously 'unclean' as is anything contiguous with death. In societies in which professional mourners exist, they are expected to make a good show of their own grieving. If a re-ritualisation of these ultimate matters of life and death is to be undertaken, then the grief workers would be what they should already be treated as - pariahs. Those who wish to make a living off death should put their social status where their salaries come from.



Normal conditions were restored by overturning the grounds of the Kelbie judgement on appeal, while leaving the material outcome unchanged, and a judicial hearing is now taking place in Kirkwall. At the time of writing, the hard evidence which the Social Work establishment has always claimed existed has failed to emerge: social workers are claiming that one child was insufficiently outraged by being snatched (a blame-the-victim logic akin to blaming Jewish people for insufficient opposition to the Nazis). But some of the social workers involved seem to be admitting to individual doubts, but had felt they couldn't question the hierarchy.

That last fact points back to problems of agency, problems solved neither by increasing resource allocation nor by appeals to "put our hands together for life". Problems, including the plight of any child being abused, require solution, but ceding from the family and the local community to external agencies is no more than partially adequate, both from the interests of the individuals involved and for any possibility for social change. Any possibility for radical change starts from elsewhere than propping up existing institutions by appealing to abstract solidarity and the spirit of youth.



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